



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

January 22, 2009

TO: Honorable Phil Andrews, Council President

FROM: Isiah Leggett, County Executive

RE: Proposed Purple Line

Prior to the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment Committee's work session on the Purple Line, I would like to convey my position on the preferred option. We all recognize the need to address mobility and accessibility issues in the Bethesda and New Carrollton corridor. The corridor is experiencing unacceptable levels of roadway congestion, unreliable transit travel times, limited travel mode options and degraded transit accessibility to the larger metropolitan region due to inferior connections to radial Metrorail lines and to other rail and bus services.

Construction of the Purple Line would provide environmental benefits to an area classified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a *serious non-attainment region*, while simultaneously providing a stimulus for community revitalization. It is also critical to another shared goal of promoting smart growth.

My position is based on the input I have received through a rigorous and open-minded process. I asked my technical staff for their critical analysis. They have worked with the technical staffs from the Maryland Transit Administration and Prince George's County. I have taken into account hundreds of letters and emails from residents and from other elected and appointed officials. Prince George's County Executive Jack Johnson and I established a Bi-County Task Force to have our staffs discuss a variety of issues critical to both counties. I have also benefited from many conversations and meetings with those in opposition to the project, or those advocating specific alignments or transportation mode for the project. I have received important recommendations from the Western Montgomery County Citizen Advisory Board and the Silver Spring Citizen Advisory Board and from many other business and neighborhood organizations.

I met recently with Secretary of Transportation John Porcari and County Executive Jack Johnson to ask important and critical questions dealing with the project scope, costs, environmental impacts, financing plans, schedule, and the role of Montgomery County in the expected financial obligations for the selected project. Secretary Porcari's answers to these questions helped me to finalize my position. My position reflects what I believe is in the best long-term interest of the county.

Based on my meeting with Secretary Porcari, I have the following understanding about the Maryland Department of Transportation and Montgomery County commitments:

1. The State, to the extent feasible, will not require Montgomery County participation in the State's local share of a federally approved project. Should the County be required to share in the local costs, the State will credit the County for its significant contributions to the project that includes the Georgetown Branch right-of-way purchased by the County in 1988 for the future light rail transit line, the design and construction of the Bethesda South Entrance to the Metrorail system, and to pay for the construction of the replacement and improvement of the existing Capital Crescent Trail (CCT);
2. Maryland Department Of Transportation (MDOT) will credit Montgomery County for the above contributions either as part of the Purple Line project or via another approach in the Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP);
3. Should project costs exceed the amount in the federal full-funding grant agreement, the State will cover all of those additional costs;
4. MDOT will strive to keep the Purple Line within the Medium Cost Effectiveness rating for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding consideration;
5. MDOT will own and operate the Purple Line and integrate it into the WMATA rail and bus system.

As the Council is aware, there have been a number of legitimate concerns and issues raised. However, these concerns both individually and collectively, do not in my view outweigh the long-term benefits of a light rail alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative. After considerable analysis and discussions, it is evident that light rail is the more viable long-term option given the consistency with the Master Plan, the high level of forecasted ridership, the better travel times between Bethesda and Silver Spring, and the ability of light rail to better support transit-oriented development.

It is important to convey a number of factors and concerns that should be considered by MDOT and the Federal Transit Administration as the Purple Line project proceeds:

1. Build the trail under the Air Rights Building in a manner compatible with the High Investment Light Rail alternative;

2. Examine during preliminary engineering the benefits and cost, and the property and environmental effects, of widening the trail to 12 feet with 2-foot buffers on each side versus the proposed 10-foot trail as proposed;
3. Pursue the feasibility and long-term benefits and cost of using grass between the tracks
4. Investigate design and building techniques to maximize the retention of existing trees in the corridor;
5. Examine during preliminary engineering the feasibility of using hybrid light rail vehicles (or dual powered vehicles) that do not require wires, poles, and electrical substations. This option would provide aesthetic benefits, as well as potential capital and operating cost savings by eliminating the infrastructure to support the vehicles. It would increase the chances of preserving the existing tree canopy and realize the associated environmental benefits;
6. Examine the extent of the tail tracks in the Woodmont East plaza to minimize their length beyond the tunnel, and establish an operating framework on how the tail tracks will be used;
7. Build the surface medium light rail alignment through Silver Spring following Bonifant and Wayne Avenue. Include a stop at the new Silver Spring Library site but eliminate the Dale Drive stop. Special attention should be given to the LRT vehicle crossing of Georgia Avenue and the intersection of Fenton and Wayne to ensure that the light rail, pedestrians, and vehicle traffic will operate in a compatible manner.

My staff and I will continue to work with the State to ensure that as this important project proceeds through planning and construction, the needs and concerns of our residents are considered to the maximum extent possible, that the planning addresses the issues noted above and that environmental concerns continue to be addressed.

Hon. Phil Andrews

January 22, 2009

Page 4

cc: Hon. Barbara Mikulski
Hon. Benjamin Cardin
Hon. Christopher Van Hollen
Hon. Donna Edwards
Hon. Wayne T. Gilchrest
Hon. Dutch Ruppersberger
Hon. John Sarbanes
Hon. Steny H. Hoyer
Hon. Roscoe G. Bartlett
Hon. Elijah E. Cummings
Hon. John D. Porcari
Hon. Richard S. Madaleno
Hon. Brian J. Feldman
Hon. Jennie M. Forehand
Hon. Brian E. Frosh
Hon. Robert Garagiola
Hon. Nancy J. King
Hon. Rona E. Kramer
Hon. Michael Lenett
Hon. Jamie Raskin
Hon. Saqib Ali
Hon. Charles E. Barkley
Hon. Kumar P. Barve
Hon. William A. Bronrott
Hon. Alfred C. Carr
Hon. Kathleen Dumais
Hon. William C. Frick
Hon. James Gilchrist
Hon. Ana Sol Gutierrez
Hon. Henry B. Heller
Hon. Sheila Hixson
Hon. Tom Hucker
Hon. Anne R. Kaiser
Hon. Benjamin F. Kramer
Hon. Susan C. Lee
Hon. Roger Manno
Hon. Heather Mizeur
Hon. Karen S. Montgomery
Hon. Kirill Reznik
Hon. Craig Rice
Hon. Luiz Simmons
Hon. Herman Taylor
Hon. Jeff Waldstreicher
Hon. Jack Johnson
Montgomery County Council